

The Warden's Corner

by Liz Schwall

This year, the award for “unsportsmanlike” behavior goes to a Shasta Lake resident for an alleged act of animal cruelty that stunned even seasoned DFG wardens.

The DFG received information that a live bear was being kept in a culvert trap in a remote area of Shasta County. Culvert traps, which are essentially large “box” traps, are usually set by DFG biologists in order to live trap and gather biological information on bears. This trap, however, had not been set by a DFG employee. Wardens immediately set out to locate the bear and were shocked to find a live bear, in very poor condition, locked in what appeared to be a stolen culvert trap. The bear, believed to have been in the trap for up to eight days, stood inches deep in its own feces and urine. The wardens had information that the bear was apparently being kept alive until the opening day of the bear archery season. The wardens gave the bear several quarts of water but then made the tough decision to leave the bear in the trap for one more day in an attempt to catch the suspect.

The officers then began an around the clock “stakeout,” watching the trap and the adjacent cabin. Their efforts were eventually rewarded when the suspect arrived at the trap early Saturday morning, the opening day of the bear season. The suspect, an ex-felon, was promptly arrested and charged with felony cruelty to animals. He

was also charged with possessing firearms, which is illegal for convicted felons to do. Ironically, this was not the first time that wardens had information regarding this individual. For several years, local



This DFG culvert trap is like the one used to illegally capture a bear. File photo.

wardens had heard rumors that he used a stolen trap to capture bears. Allegedly, he would then shoot the bears inside the trap when the season opened. After his arrest, the suspect remained in jail in lieu of \$10,000 bail. The disposition is pending. 🐾

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Pronghorn: No Doe Tags This Season

The latest data is in, and it doesn't bode well for hunters hoping for a pronghorn antelope tag. The pronghorn population is down slightly from last year, prompting wildlife officials to play it safe by cutting tag allotments.

The DFG's northeastern California winter census counted 4,330 pronghorn, a decline from the previous year and the third consecutive year below 5,000 animals.

As a result, the DFG has proposed cutting the allotment of buck tags and eliminating doe tags for the 2000 hunting season. This year, 220 buck tags will be sold, compared to 350 buck and 100 doe tags for the 1999 season.

In 1992, the state's pronghorn antelope population was the highest it had been in more than a century with nearly 8,000 animals. The population took a nosedive during the harsh 1992-93 winter and has yet to recover to its 1991 high.

According to Jon Fischer, a DFG wildlife biologist and statewide pronghorn antelope program coordinator, “Since the ‘92-‘93 winter, pronghorn populations have not recovered to the extent the DFG had expected. The recent survey gives cause for concern, but not alarm.”

Researchers are still optimistic for the long-term recovery of the state's pronghorn. In the meantime, what is the treatment prescribed by wildlife managers? “Less hunting pressure,” says Fischer, “and more patience.” 🐾